

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Docket No. 2022-_____

In the Matter of:

Application of SR Lambert II, LLC for a Certificate
of Environmental Compatibility and Public
Convenience and Necessity for the Construction
and Operation of a 100 MW Solar Facility in
Georgetown County, South Carolina Pursuant to
S.C. Code Ann. § 58-33-10 *et. seq.*, and Request to
Proceed with Initial Construction Work, S.C. Code
Ann. § 58-33-110(7).

**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE
OF ENVIRONMENTAL
COMPATIBILITY
AND PUBLIC CONVENIENCE
AND NECESSITY**

SR Lambert II, LLC (hereinafter, “Lambert II”) hereby applies to the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the “Commission”) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Convenience and Necessity to construct and operate a 100 MW solar photovoltaic (“PV”) generating facility (the “Project”) on an undeveloped site located in Georgetown County near the unincorporated area of Lambert (the “Site”). Lambert II will operate and own the Project and its energy, which Lambert II will sell to the South Carolina Public Service Authority (“Santee Cooper”) and Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (“Central”). This application is filed pursuant to the provisions of S.C. Code Ann. § 58-33-10 *et. seq.*

1. Applicant. Lambert II is a Delaware limited liability company with its principal offices at 222 2nd Avenue South, Suite 1900, Nashville, TN 37201. Lambert II is authorized to do business in South Carolina, and copies of its registration as a company in good standing in South Carolina are on file with Secretary of State.

Lambert II is a wholly owned subsidiary of Silicon Ranch Corporation (“Silicon Ranch” or “SR”), a Delaware corporation also headquartered at the same address as Lambert II. Silicon

Ranch, through its subsidiaries and affiliates, is a leading U.S. solar developer, owner, and operator of utility-scale solar projects. The company's portfolio includes more than 2.1 gigawatts of PV systems that are contracted, under construction, or operating, with 2 gigawatts more in its development pipeline. Currently, Silicon Ranch has more than 135 solar facilities operating in 15 states. Silicon Ranch has been hailed for its pioneering role in the development of the solar industry in the Southeast, including the first large-scale solar projects in Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and Arkansas.

Silicon Ranch brings a seasoned approach to its development process and has an unblemished record of project execution. Since it began operations in 2011, Silicon Ranch has successfully executed every project for every PPA it has signed. Another distinction is that unlike many other solar developers, Silicon Ranch and its subsidiaries own and operate their entire portfolio. This means that Silicon Ranch is deeply committed to the partners and communities it serves, and stands behind the daily performance of its facilities. As a long-term owner, Silicon Ranch has a strong interest in the continuous improvement and sustainability of its projects. For example, Silicon Ranch has pioneered industry-leading land management practices aimed at enhancing the environmental, social, and economic benefits of projects for local communities.¹

Additional information describing Lambert II and its parent Silicon Ranch, including its leadership, technical expertise, financial strength, track record, and, importantly, company values, are provided in the testimony of Matthew Kisber (**Exhibit C**) and Connor Echols (**Exhibit D**) and exhibits filed herewith and incorporated herein.

¹ USA Today. (2019, December). "Solar company merges energy production with sheep grazing to restore soil, biodiversity." Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2019/12/30/silicon-ranch-merges-solar-power-sheep-restore-soil-improve-land/2775411001/>

2. Project Description. The Project proposed will be a 100 MW capacity PV facility located on undeveloped land in western Georgetown County in the unincorporated area of Lambert. The Project will be a ground mounted solar PV system comprised of solar arrays, inverters, transformers, racking, posts, wiring, security cameras, and other accessories. In all, the Project Site will involve approximately 1,290 acres of land.

A complete description of the Project and the location at which it is to be built, including a color map, layout with all major equipment features and facilities, and information pertaining to the project site are all contained in the testimony and exhibits filed herewith.

3. Statement of Need. Santee Cooper biannually develops a resource plan for meeting customers' energy needs, analyzing a combination of existing generation, customer demand-side and energy efficiency alternatives, and additional supply-side options including self-build and power purchase transactions. The Santee Cooper 2020 Integrated Resource Plan (the "Santee Cooper IRP") describes resource plans to meet customers' energy needs over a long-term forecast period and further sets out near-term action steps to implement its Preferred Resources Plan (the "PRP") for meeting energy needs.² In developing its PRP, Santee Cooper's goal was not only to create a diverse and reliable portfolio of resources, but one that also incorporates innovative technologies, improves operating efficiency, reduces environmental impacts, and results in lower overall cost. Pursuant to those goals, Santee Cooper finalized a PRP that seeks to retire ageing coals assets, such as its Winyah Generation Station, and to replace that power with clean, reliable, and cost-effective options like solar. In particular, Santee Cooper concluded that its resource portfolio would be best served by the addition of 500 MW of new solar resources by 2023, to be

² Available at https://www.santeecooper.com/About/Increasing-Value/ORS-Reports/_pdfs/Dec-23-Signed-Filed-IRP.pdf.

accomplished through a request for proposals (“RFP”) process undertaken in partnership with Central Electrical Cooperative, Inc., with plans for an additional 1000 MW of solar resources by 2032.³ The proposal for the Lambert II Project stems from the above-described solar RFP.

Central, a South Carolina electric distribution cooperative, also published its own integrated resource plan (the “Central IRP”).⁴ Because Central relies heavily on Santee Cooper for power generation,⁵ the Central IRP focused on the same resource issues evaluated by Santee Cooper, including power sources to replace the ageing, coal-burning Winyah Generation Station. In its analysis, Central found that replacing energy purchases from fossil fuel plants, like the Winyah Generation Station, with the development of solar energy resources will reduce power costs. As a result, Central concluded that it and its member-cooperatives should continue working to expand access for its members to low-cost solar energy.⁶

On June 5, 2020, Santee Cooper issued the RFP seeking written proposals from qualified suppliers of solar energy to develop and sell output from PV solar projects to Santee Cooper and Central. Santee Cooper anticipated a procurement of up to 500 MW of solar power through the RFP, selecting multiple solar projects having individual capacities ranging between 25 MW and 125 MW. Pursuant to the RFP, both Santee Cooper and Central participated in the evaluation and selection of the most attractive proposed projects. Selected projects would then negotiate one or more power purchase agreements (“PPA”) entitling buyers Santee Cooper and Central to receive available output and all other project attributes. PPAs would further obligate the solar energy

³ See Santee Cooper IRP, at p. 73.

⁴ Available at <https://www.cepci.org/sites/cepci/files/Documents/Central%20Electric%202020%20IRP.pdf>.

⁵ Central largely buys power from generators, like Santee Cooper, which it then resells to its member customers. In fact, as of 2018, Santee Cooper accounted for approximately two-thirds of all the power Central sold to its members. See Central IRP, at p. 17.

⁶ See Central IRP, at p. 90-91.

supplier to plan, finance, implement, operate, maintain, insure, and eventually retire the solar project—in other words, the wherewithal to take care of everything from start to retirement many years later. Per the RFP, projects are expected to deliver power not later than January 1, 2024. In this case, Lambert II anticipates substantial completion of construction and power delivery by Q1 of 2023.

Based on the RFP's requirements, Santee Cooper and Central selected Silicon Ranch's Lambert II Project proposal among those to be developed.⁷

Additional information concerning the need for the Project is included in the testimony of Kenneth Sercy (**Exhibit F**) and other witnesses, as well as exhibits filed with this application and incorporated herein.

4. Environmental and Cultural Resources Assessment and Impacts. By its design and nature, the Project will provide clean renewable power with minimal impacts to the environment. The Project's generation of solar energy will create no air or water emissions and no environmental contamination. During and after the Project, because of Silicon Ranch's leading land management practices, the Project site can have continued agricultural uses.

Regarding the environmental and cultural resources assessment process, Lambert II engaged environmental and cultural resource consultants with HDR, Inc. ("HDR") to assist on the Project. HDR, through its work, identified relevant resources or aspects of the Project that would require permitting and/or consultation with interested public and private parties. HDR further recommended additional analysis, which has been or is in the process of being completed. Based

⁷ In addition to the Lambert II Project, Silicon Ranch also submitted a second proposal for a PV solar project of equal capacity to be located at an adjacent site in Georgetown County. The second project, to be owned by affiliate SR Lambert I, LLC, is the subject of a parallel application filed contemporaneously with the captioned matter.

on HDR's assessment, no material barriers to construction on the proposed site have been identified, and Lambert II anticipates being able to fulfill all necessary permit and consultation requirements. Additional details of the assessment are included in the testimony of witnesses Connor Echols (**Exhibit D**) and Blair Wade (**Exhibit E**) and in exhibits filed with this application and incorporated herein.

5. Economic Justification. The central economic justification for the Project is the need to replace the ageing, carbon-dependent generation fleet of Santee Cooper with clean, cost-effective energy that reliably meets demand. As described by Santee Cooper and Central in their IRPs and in the solar RFP, the best option for beginning to meet those objectives is the addition of PV solar. The Lambert II Project is a key part of implementing Santee Cooper's PRP and providing cost-effective clean energy to consumers.

As to the long-term economic success of the Project, Lambert II has or soon will enter into long-term PPAs with Santee Cooper and Central. Based on the estimated costs to develop the Project and strong demand for clean, solar energy being purchased by Santee Cooper and Central, Lambert II forecasts that the Project will remain economically sustainable for the entirety of its lifecycle. This is consistent with the success of the dozens of solar projects developed and operated elsewhere by Silicon Ranch and its affiliates.

Additional discussions and details of the projected economic strength and viability of the Project are covered in the witness testimony attached, including in the testimonies of Kenneth Sercy (**Exhibit F**) and Connor Echols (**Exhibit D**).

6. Proof of Service. Application **Exhibit A**, collectively attached hereto and made a part hereof, is proof of service of copies of this application on the Chief Executive of each municipality and the head of each state and local government agency charged with the duty of

protecting the environment or of planning land use in the area in the county in which any portion of the facility is to be located pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §58-33-120(2).

7. Public Notice. Attached as Application **Exhibit B** and made a part hereof is the public notice given to persons residing in the municipalities entitled to receive notice pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §58-33-120(3) by publication of a summary of the application, the date on or about which it is to be filed, and the newspapers of general circulation in which such notice will be published. Application **Exhibit B**, also comprised of affidavits from newspapers, is proof that the notice has been appropriately published.

8. Correspondence or Communications. The name, title, address, and telephone number of counsel and other persons to whom correspondence or communications relating to the application should be addressed are as follows:

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9. Request to Begin Initial Construction Work. Per Section 58-33-110(7), the Commission may, where justified by public convenience and necessity, grant permission to an applicant to proceed with “initial clearing, excavation, dredging and construction; provided, however, that in engaging in such clearing, excavation, dredging or construction, the person shall proceed at his own risk, and such permission shall not in any way indicate approval by the Commission of the proposed site or facility.” Per the terms of Santee Cooper’s RFP, Lambert II is to provide beginning by no later than 2023. At this time, Lambert II has proposed a project schedule with the intent of being able to provide clean, solar power by the first quarter of 2023. In light of the clear benefits of the Lambert II project and the minimal or nonexistent environment impacts shown here, Lambert II requests permission to begin initial construction work as soon as possible to better ensure timely completion. Allowing initial work to commence, subject to the statute’s terms, serves the interests of public convenience and necessity.

10. Table of Exhibits. For clarity, Lambert II identifies and incorporates the following exhibits filed herewith. Lambert I reserves the right to supplement and/or amend the below in writing or at hearing in accordance with the Commission’s rules of procedure.

Exhibit A – Certificate of Service

Exhibit B – Affidavits of Publication

Exhibit C – Pre-filed Written Testimony of Matthew Kisber

Exhibit D – Pre-filed Written Testimony of Testimony of Connor Echols

Exhibit E – Pre-filed Written Testimony of Blair Wade, containing the following exhibits:

- Exhibit 1 - CV
- Exhibit 2 – Permit Matrix
- Exhibit 3 – Critical Issues Analysis
- Exhibit 4 – Phase I Environmental Assessment
- Exhibit 5 – Cultural Resources Assessment
- Exhibit 6 – US Fish & Wildlife - Federal Listed Species Effect Letter

- Exhibit 7 – Federal Listed Species Effects Memorandum
- Exhibit 8 – SC Dept. of Natural Resources – Species Effects

Exhibit F – Pre-filed Written Testimony of Kenneth Sercy

- Exhibit 1 – CV

Exhibit G – Lambert I and Lambert II Sites and Equipment

Exhibit H – Permit Matrix

WHEREFORE, based on the complete application herein filed, SR Lambert II, LLC respectfully requests that the Commission issue a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Convenience and Necessity for the proposed Lambert II Project.

Respectfully submitted this 3rd day of March, 2022.

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